

Considering the consequences for human security: the influx of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh



*Human security is another challenge Bangladesh is already facing and it will intensify with the influx of the Rohingya refugees. Whilst The Bangladesh government has been praised for providing them with shelter, **Mohammad Tarikul Islam** discusses the security concerns of Rohingya refugees and the possibility of repatriation to Myanmar.*

[Human security](#) denotes human dignity. The term human security propagated by UNDP in the post-cold war era intends to focus on individuals coming across values and goals such as dignity, equality and solidarity. The [Rohingya](#) is an ethnic minority group in Myanmar that has due to persecution, crossed into neighboring Bangladesh over decades, laying uneven pressure on the scarce resources of Bangladesh. The Rohingya crisis has been emerged as [potential threat to Bangladesh's internal stability](#). Bangladesh, therefore, has been in a great fix struggling to realise the national interests of the country, and uphold human security issues of Rohingya all at once.

Current state of Rohingya refugees

The number of Rohingya refugees has crossed half a million since the beginning of the crisis from August 24, 2017. According to the [United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (UNHCR), the Rohingya issue has been a textbook example of ethnic cleansing navigated by the civil-military administration of Myanmar. There has been an Influx of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh since the 1970s and their number has surpassed [500,000](#). Bangladesh is now hosting around one million Rohingya refugees and this highlights the serious concern of human security.

Past and present experience suggests that the Myanmar government has been very reluctant to take back their nationals, the Rohingya, despite the [robust diplomatic endeavors of Bangladesh](#) government regarding repatriation. It gives the impression that the repatriation of Rohingya to their homeland might be resulted in uncertainty. What we could perceive, providing basic provisions of their life like food, shelter, and healthcare have been the utmost priorities at the moment and also for the rest of the period until the return of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar.

Dilemma of human security

A prolonged stay will ultimately worsen the pitiable human security condition of the Rohingya community. Rohingya refugees who are particularly vulnerable such as those unaccompanied by relatives, are seriously at the risk of [human trafficking](#). This is evidenced by the fact that [international human trafficking gangs](#) have been closely observing this situation with the intent of abducting female Rohingya. Mentioning stubborn Rohingya crisis as potential threat to human security, [UN agencies](#) working in Bangladesh have been in appeal to the international community for adequate fund to provide them basic supplies for survival. It is the experience of different countries which hosted refugees during many humanitarian crises that international supports lessen over time if the refugee crises continue. In this kind of situations, the decisive economic affliction of humanitarian support to the refugees falls on the host country.

Security concern, particularly human security, is another challenge that Bangladesh is already facing and it will intensify further in the future with the influx of the Rohingya refugees over the years. Bangladesh government has been accredited for providing them with various facilities, including shelter, food and medical care despite many limitations. Health security and food security has been the evolving challenges in the makeshifts where refugees are living. Apparently [food insecurity](#) within the displaced Rohingya refugee population is turning out in Bangladesh. This has been resulting in malnutrition with refugee population and if not the food situation improves on an urgent basis, there is likelihood that more Rohingya children could even meet life-threatening event. We should keep it in mind that, the country has to rely on the food grains for domestic consumption. Meanwhile, the [government of Bangladesh](#) took many steps for resolving the Rohingya crisis while various forces, including the Armed Forces, police, Border Guard of Bangladesh and Rapid Action Battalion along with the civil administration, public representatives and general people are providing necessary services to the Rohingya.

Given their living space mostly located in Teknaf-Cox's Bazar areas, the refugee earmarked areas are adjacent to the settlements of the local citizens. Once, many awkward incidences happened between them causing law and order situations. According to the [media report](#), a total of seven dead bodies had been found near Rohingya camps while local law enforcement agencies have documented around 30 criminal activities there. At least 20 Rohingya people were arrested in connection with criminal activities such as murder, vandalism, yaba (drugs) smuggling, engaging in violence and attacking the police. It is foreseen that, as the displaced Rohingya continue to arrive in Bangladesh, the smugglers can take advantage of the situation to smuggle drugs into the country.

In the future, with increasing number of the refugees and sheltered close to the native citizens' settlements there is the likelihood of increasing happening of such incidences and aggravating the local social and cultural harmony among the local citizens and the Rohingya refugees. The other pertinent issue is the [danger of environmental security](#) as there is likelihood of widespread environmental degradation due to the settlement of the refugees in areas close to hills and forest lands. As regards [economic security](#), the bulk departure of Rohingya in Bangladesh would endanger the market balance. This may result in unstable labour market as supply will be more than the demand Bangladesh has at present. Jobless people will seek whatever means necessary to make a living and this sort of unhealthy completion in the labour market will seriously threaten the social cohesion.



A girl playing with a kite on a UN visit to a Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar. Photo credit: UN Women, [Flickr](#), [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).

New breadth of global interest

Bangladesh is making every effort in a professional fashion to harness regional and global power to bring in an amicable solution to this emerging crisis despite the position of [China and India](#) on the side of Myanmar on Rohingya issue. Both countries have significant strategic and economic interests in Myanmar and are therefore reluctant to intervene. Though Myanmar holds no major importance in Russian policy – no geopolitical interests are at stake there, while [Moscow's attitude](#) to the issue in the UN could potentially to upset its Muslim allies, for instance Iran.

The Bangladesh government has been making diplomatic efforts in persuading Myanmar to repatriate the refugees over the months but in reality, it is highly unlikely the Bangladesh government will succeed in sending the refugees back to Myanmar in the near future. [Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed in late 2017](#) to complete the return of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees within two years, notwithstanding international doubts that they will be held in forbidding detention camps that may result in another round of cruelty both physically and psychologically. The Bangladesh government may therefore have to consider possible long-term solutions to address this additional population living in Bangladesh.

Looking for amicable repatriation

Considering the complex array of humanitarian, political, and law and order issues facing Rohingya refugees, security, development and environmental concerns must be prioritized rethinking different phases of enforcement. Since the beginning of the crisis, the government of Bangladesh set up a separate civilian authority to manage the refugee crisis. [All domestic and international aid agencies](#) are duly coordinated by the government to ensure maximum utilization of resources avoiding duplication of efforts. UNHCR, the principal partner of Bangladesh government is coordinating with the international community to leverage their efforts for ensuring minimum standard of their living. The government of Bangladesh has attempted to ensure that everyone gets provisions from the distribution sites and serve as the main contact for any kind of issue, be it finding information, or resolving disputes.

The recent visit of [UNSC members in Bangladesh](#) bears the testimony of Bangladesh's unyielding diplomatic efforts at various levels to arrive at an amicable solution of the Rohingya crisis. Should repatriation succeed however, the United Nations must coordinate and communicate with donors and other relevant stakeholders to come forward to solve this problem permanently by putting pressure on the Myanmar government to provide a safe and secure environment. At the same time the UN must enforce the recommendation of the [Kofi Annan Commission](#) by imposing diplomatic force on Myanmar. The Bangladesh government should also continue with its efforts to encourage other governments to become more engaged and continue to address the pressing needs of these refugees- needs that will only grow as long as this situation remains unresolved.

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